

Standard 7-5

The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes and effects of world conflicts in the early twentieth century.

7-5.5 Explain the causes, key events, and outcomes of World War II, including the German, Italian, and Japanese drives for empire; the role of appeasement and isolationism in Europe and the United States; the major turning points of the war and the principal theaters of conflict; the importance of geographic factors; the roles of political leaders; the human costs and impact of the war both on civilizations and on soldiers. (H, G, P, E)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand/Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In fifth grade, students explained the principal events related to the United States' involvement in World War II (5-4.4). Students also explained the effects of increasing worldwide economic interdependence following World War II (5-4.7).

In eighth grade, students will summarize the significant aspects of the economic growth experienced by South Carolina during and following World War II (8-7.1).

In Global Studies, students will explain the causes, key events, and outcomes of World War II, including the German, Italian, and Japanese drives for empire, the role of appeasement and isolationism in Europe and the United States; the major turning points of the war and the principal theaters of conflict; the importance of geographic factors during the war; and the political leaders of the time (GS-5.4).

In US History, students will analyze the United States' decision to enter World War II and the United States' movement from a policy of isolationism to international involvement (USHC-8.1). The students will also summarize and illustrate on a time line the major events and leaders of World War II (USHC-8.2) and the impact of World War II and mobilization on the home front (USHC-8.3).

It is essential for students to know the major causes, key events, and results of World War II. Discontent over the Treaty of Versailles was an important cause of World War II (See Standard 7-5.4). The military aggression displayed by Germany, Italy, and Japan was a significant cause of World War II. All three countries wanted to establish empires, and little was done by the international community, consumed by their own economic woes to stop them. WWII began in 1939 when Hitler invaded Poland and Great Britain and France abandoned their previous policy of appeasement as it only encouraged the Axis Powers to continue their drives for empire, leading to another world war. World War II had two theaters of fighting: Europe and Asia. The war in the Pacific had already begun with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. The Germans conducted a *blitzkrieg*, or "lightening war" against Poland and the Soviets, German allies (due to the Soviet Non-Aggression Pact signed in 1939), attacked Poland from the west. Denmark and Norway soon fell to Germany, and France surrendered to the Germans in 1940. Hitler then focused on invading Great Britain. During the Battle of Britain (1940-1941), the German air force repeatedly bombed the country. The British, however, used radar to prepare for attacks and had technology that enabled them to decode German secret messages. The British, under the

leadership of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, refused to surrender, and Hitler had to focus on attacking other areas in Europe. Fighting also occurred in North Africa and in the Balkans. The Germans wanted to control the Suez Canal in order to have access to the oil-rich Middle East. Yugoslavia and Greece fell to the Axis Powers in 1941. Hitler then betrayed his ally, the Soviet Union, and attacked that country in 1941. The Germans were unsuccessful in taking Leningrad or Moscow and 500,000 Germans died during the invasion.

Despite the passage of several Neutrality Acts between 1935 and 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt recognized the necessity of US involvement in the war to prevent the defeat of the Allies.

In 1939, Congress amended its policy to allow the US to sell weapons to the Allies that were paid for with cash and transported (cash and carry policy) the weapons on their own ships, again seeking to eliminate a factor that drew the US into WWI. This, however, was not enough, so in 1941, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act that allowed Roosevelt to lend or lease weapons and other supplies to countries that were important to the interests of the U.S.

Japan invaded French Indochina in 1941, prompting the US to place an oil embargo on Japan to prevent further aggression. Japan then attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and Congress declared war on Japan the next day. The Japanese moved quickly throughout the Pacific taking over Guam, Wake Island, Hong Kong, the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, and Burma. The tide began to turn in favor of the United States in 1942. The US defeated Japan in the Battle of Coral Sea, saving Australia from a Japanese invasion. The US defeated Japan in the Battle of Midway, heavily damaging hundreds of Japanese planes and all of the aircraft carriers on the island. After the Battle of Midway, the US began to engage in “island-hopping” past islands heavily secured by Japan taking over islands that were easier to seize in order to get closer to Japan while saving countless American lives. A turning point occurred when the Japanese experienced a devastating loss at the Battle of Guadalcanal, the first offensive against Japan launched by combined allied forces on land, sea and air.

By the end of 1942, the tide was turning in favor of the Allies in the Mediterranean and along the Eastern Front. Allied forces, led by American General Dwight Eisenhower, defeated German General Rommel’s forces in North Africa. The Germans were also on the defensive, a turning point, after they were defeated in the Battle of Stalingrad in February 1943. As the Soviets continued to push the Germans from the east, British and American forces invaded and conquered Sicily in 1943. Allied forces entered Rome in 1944, and Mussolini was killed in 1945 by his own countrymen. The invasion of Normandy, to liberate German-controlled France and northern Europe, began on June 6, 1944, called D-Day, and the Allied forces were able to liberate France by September. Hitler’s final attempt to achieve a victory against Allied forces was at the Battle of the Bulge. Despite breaking through American defenses, the Germans were ultimately pushed back and forced to retreat. Allied troops from both east and west moved into Germany, causing the Germans to surrender (VE Day) on May 7, 1945. The US then moved closer to defeating Japan by victories at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Citing the need to hasten the war’s end and save lives that would be lost in an invasion of the island country, President Harry Truman ordered the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and over

Nagasaki three days later. Six days after the dropping of the second atomic bomb, Japan announced its intention to surrender, formally doing so on September 2, 1945 (VJ Day).

World War II was the most devastating war in history. Fighting cost the lives of millions of soldiers on both sides and sixty million people were killed. The majority of European deaths were civilians, as air bombings there left cities in shambles and the war also destroyed much of the countryside. Many people were homeless and famine and disease spread through the cities. The Holocaust claimed the lives of six million Jews (See Standard 7-5.6). Japan lost two million people. Tokyo was heavily damaged, while Hiroshima and Nagasaki were obliterated.

The Allied home front played an important role in winning the war. Factories produced weapons and supplies for the war, and many women worked in the factories. The Allies used propaganda to help strengthen support for the war and to help conserve materials and resources, since there was a shortage of consumer goods.

Following the end of the war, the United States occupied a demilitarized Japan until 1952. During that time a new constitution was written making Japan a constitutional monarchy. Germany was occupied by Allied forces after the war for several years. Nazi leaders were also charged with war crimes and placed on trial (See Standard 7-5.6).

It is not essential for students to know the specific dates of all the important battles of the war.

Assessment guidelines: The objective of this indicator is to **explain** the causes, key events, and results of World War II. Students are expected to **analyze** how military aggression and the failure of the appeasement policy led to World War II. It is important for students to **explain** how the war was fought, the turning points of the war, and how it was won or lost by each side. Appropriate assessment should include an **analysis** of the results of the war.